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For Immediate Release
Wednesday, January 23, 2003

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National Drug Intelligence Center Assessment Cites New York City as Major Drug Transshipment Area

Illicit drug trafficking and abuse of cocaine, heroin, and marijuana pose a serious threat to New York City, according to a recent assessment compiled by the National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC), a component agency of the U.S. Department of Justice.

The New York (State) Drug Threat Assessment depicts New York City as a key distribution center for illicit drugs within the state as well as a vital transshipment hub to other areas of the country. Law enforcement officials in at least 24 states have identified New York as a supply area for drugs entering their state.

Drug traffickers are taking advantage of New York's well-developed commercial highway system and busy international airports, such as JFK and La Guardia, to move clandestine shipments of illicit drugs throughout the state and country, the assessment concluded. Illegal narcotics are being concealed and transported in automobiles, trucks, aircraft, maritime vessels, trains, and through parcel delivery services.

The assessment also found that the high population density and ethnic diversity of the area allows for the easy movement of criminal groups within the region. The ethnic diversity of the New York City area supports the existence of an equally diverse set of drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) and criminal groups, the assessment states.

Colombian and Dominican DTOs and criminal groups dominate the wholesale distribution of cocaine and heroin in New York City and Mexican criminal groups are increasing their influence, the assessment states. At the retail level, Dominican criminal groups are distributing cocaine and heroin and appear to be primary suppliers to African American and Hispanic street gangs such as Bloods, Latin Kings, and Neta. Jamaican, Puerto Rican, Asian criminal groups and members of traditional organized crime networks are also distributing significant quantities of illicit drugs in the state.

The assessment revealed that street level dealers are selling multiple drugs. Law enforcement officials have reported that heroin and cocaine are frequently seized at the same time, and

MDMA is also being seized with other drugs. By offering more than one drug, dealers are able to increase their client base and their profits, the report asserts.

The report assesses the threat posed by illicit drugs by drug type as follows:

Cocaine

The assessment reported that cocaine, mainly crack, is a serious drug threat to New York. Powdered cocaine and crack are readily available, commonly abused, and more frequently associated with violent crime than any other illicit drug in the state.

Significant quantities of cocaine are being sold in New York City and transshipped to other areas of the country, the assessment found. Colombian and Dominican drug trafficking organizations and criminal groups are the primary transporters of cocaine into New York with Mexican criminal groups becoming increasingly involved. Cocaine is transported from New York City to upstate New York in automobiles and, to a lesser extent, on trains and buses. Many distributors in the state who had previously sold cocaine outdoors have begun distributing the drug from private residences and other indoor locations such as nightclubs, and to a lesser extent, through call-and-deliver services.

Heroin

The assessment found that heroin is also a significant threat. South American heroin is most prevalent. However, Southeast and Southwest Asian heroin also are available. Mexican black tar and brown powdered heroin are sporadically available.

New York City serves as a primary transportation hub for significant quantities of heroin. Colombian drug trafficking organizations and criminal groups control the transportation of South American heroin into New York. However, they are increasingly relying on Dominican drug trafficking organizations and criminal groups and occasionally Mexican criminal groups to transport South American heroin into the state. Ethnic Chinese criminal groups (Fukinese) and West African criminal groups (Nigerian) are the primary transporters of Southeast Asian heroin into New York. Pakistani criminal groups are the primary transporters of Southwest Asian heroin.

Marijuana

Marijuana is the most widely available and frequently abused illicit drug in New York. Most of the marijuana available in New York is produced in other states or in Mexico, Jamaica, and Canada. Some marijuana is also grown in the state. Mexican and Jamaican criminal groups transport marijuana from southwestern states into New York usually using trucks, automobiles, and packaged delivery services. Forty-one percent of New York high school students reported having abused marijuana at least once in their lifetimes, according to the most recent Youth Risk Behavior Survey compiled by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Club Drugs and Diverted Pharmaceuticals

Law enforcement authorities and healthcare professionals report an increase in the abuse of other dangerous drugs in New York such as MDMA, GHB, LSD, PCP, ketamine and diverted pharmaceuticals such as Xanax, Vicodin, Dilaudid, methadone, codeine, HIV treatment drugs, steroids, and Ritalin. Several law enforcement agencies report an increased level of MDMA abuse, particularly among teenagers and young adults who attend raves or techno parties where many of these drugs are readily available and frequently abused.

Methamphetamine

Methamphetamine poses a low but increasing threat to New York. Most of the methamphetamine available in New York is produced in California and southwestern states. However, a limited number of methamphetamine labs have been seized in upstate New York and Long Island. Methamphetamine is transported into New York primarily by couriers who travel on commercial flights to the West Coast and then return to the state. Local independent dealers distribute methamphetamine at raves, techno parties and nightclubs. Members of outlaw motorcycle gangs have also been identified as distributors of the drug.

The New York (State) Drug Threat Assessment is a statewide report that addresses the status and outlook of the illicit drug threat to New York. It measures abuse, availability, production, and distribution of drugs including cocaine, heroin, marijuana, methamphetamine and other dangerous drugs such as MDMA and other club drugs. The New Drug Threat Assessment is available on the Internet at <http://www.usdoj.gov/ndic/pubs2/2580/index.htm>.

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